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Operational activities for development

Draft resolution submitted by the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. David Prendergast (Jamaica), on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/53/L.8

Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 44/211 of 22 December 1989, 47/199 of 22 December 1992, 50/120 of 20 December 1995, 52/203 of 18 December 1997, and 52/12 B of 19 December 1997, and taking into account the views of Member States, as well as Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/26 of 28 July 1998,

Reaffirming that operational activities for development within the United Nations system have an important role to play in enabling developing countries to continue to take a lead role in the management of their own development process,

Stressing that national plans and priorities constitute the only viable frame of reference for the national programming of operational activities for development within the United Nations system, and that programmes should be based on such development plans and priorities and should therefore be country-driven,

Also stressing, in that context, the need to take into account the outcomes and commitments of relevant United Nations conferences, as well as the individual mandates and complementarities of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations development system, bearing in mind the need to avoid duplication,

Further stressing that the fundamental characteristics of the operational activities of the United Nations system should be, *inter alia*, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism, as well as their ability to respond to the development needs of developing countries in a flexible manner, and that the operational activities of the United Nations system are carried out for the benefit of recipient countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development,

Noting, in this context, the activities of United Nations funds and programmes aimed at providing technical assistance to recipient countries, in response to their national economic and social needs and priorities, including poverty eradication, promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, for achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and recent United Nations conferences, and stressing the need for these activities to be undertaken at the request of interested recipient Governments strictly within the respective mandates of United Nations funds and programmes, which should receive increased contributions from donor countries,

Recognizing the urgent and specific needs of the low-income countries, in particular the least developed countries,

Emphasizing that developing countries are responsible for their development processes, and in this context stressing the responsibility of the international community, in partnership, to assist developing countries in their national development efforts,

Recalling also the role of the Economic and Social Council in providing coordination and guidance to the United Nations system to ensure that policies formulated by the General Assembly, particularly during the triennial policy review of operational activities, are implemented on a system-wide basis in accordance with Assembly resolutions 48/162 of 20 December 1993 and 50/227 of 24 May 1996,

1. (*Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system);[1]

2. *Reaffirms* its resolutions 47/199, 50/120, and parts relevant to operational activities for development of its resolution 52/12 B, and stresses the need to implement fully, based on lessons learned, all the elements of these resolutions in a coherent and timely manner, keeping in mind their interlinkages;

3. *Emphasizes also* that recipient Governments have the primary responsibility for coordinating, on the basis of national strategies and priorities, all types of external assistance, including that provided by multilateral organizations, in order to integrate effectively such assistance into their development process;

4. *Notes* the efforts made in order to rationalize and improve the function and impact of the United Nations funds and programmes;

I.A

Reform of United Nations operational activities

5. *Stresses* the need for all organizations of the United Nations development system to focus their efforts at the field level on priority areas, in accordance with the priorities identified by recipient countries and the mandates, mission statements and relevant decisions of their governing bodies, in order to avoid duplication and enhance the complementarity and impact of their work;

6. *Further stresses* that, in the context of the reform of the United Nations Secretariat and the restructuring and revitalization of the intergovernmental process, the mandates of the separate sectoral and specialized entities, funds, programmes and specialized agencies should be respected and enhanced, taking into account their complementarities;

[1] A/53/226 and Add.1–4.

I.B

Funding for United Nations operational activities

7. *Notes with regret* that although significant progress has already been achieved on the governance and functioning of the United Nations development funds and programmes, there has not been, as part of this overall change process, any increase in core resources for operational activities for development on a predictable, continuous and assured basis;

8. *Expresses serious concern* at the persistent insufficiency of resources for the operational development activities of the United Nations, in particular the decline in contributions to core resources;

9. *Reaffirms* the need for priority allocation of scarce grant resources to programmes and projects in low-income countries, particularly the least developed countries;

10. *Strongly reaffirms* that the impact of the operational activities of the United Nations system must be enhanced by, *inter alia*, a substantial increase in their funding on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries, as well as through the full implementation of its resolutions 47/199, 48/162, 50/120 and parts relevant to operational activities for development of its resolution 52/12 B;

(11. *Stresses* the need for a continuous overall improvement in the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the United Nations system in delivering its development assistance, and welcomes steps that have been taken towards that end;)

12. *Notes with appreciation* the sustained contributions of many donors and recipient countries to operational activities for development in a spirit of partnership;

13. *Urges* developed countries, in particular those countries whose overall performance is not commensurate with their capacity, taking into account established official development assistance targets, including targets established at the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and their current levels of contribution, to increase substantially their official development assistance, including contributions to the operational activities of the United Nations system;

14. *Stresses* that other countries that are in a position to do so should strive to augment their assistance in the framework of development cooperation;

15. *Notes* the importance of non-core resources, including cost-sharing, trust funds and non-traditional sources of financing, as a mechanism to enhance the capacity and to supplement the means of operational activities for development;

16. *Notes* the discussions on funding strategies in the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes, including the decisions adopted recently by the executive boards of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund as part of ongoing efforts by Member States to reverse the declining trend in core resources and to put funding for United Nations development activities on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the needs of the developing countries, and in this context urges the expeditious and productive outcome of these and other executive board discussions, and invites the Economic and Social Council to consider, on an annual basis, the overall financial picture of the funds and programmes;

I.C

United Nations Development Assistance Framework

17. *Emphasizes* that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which is currently in a pilot phase, should promote a country-driven, collaborative and coherent response by the United Nations system to achieve greater impact at the country level, fully consistent with and in support of national priorities as expressed in the country strategy notes or relevant national development plans, as appropriate;

18. *Stresses* the importance of ensuring full government participation in the formulation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and its full ownership through the agreement of the recipient Governments concerned to the finalized Framework, bearing in mind that the responsibility for coordination of all assistance and developmental activities rests with the national Government;

19. *Stresses also* the need to ensure the full and active participation of the funds and programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system in the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

20. *Notes* the importance of closer consultation in the formulation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework between national Governments, relevant United Nations development agencies, including specialized agencies, and other relevant development partners;

21. *Notes* that the country strategy note remains a voluntary initiative and that where it does not exist, other similar frameworks reflecting national priorities should be used as the basis for the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, to ensure that the Framework fully responds to national development priorities and needs;

22. *Notes* the role that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework should play to facilitate, *inter alia*, the United Nations contribution to the coordinated follow-up of the major United Nations conferences at the field level, and the importance of the common country assessment for the effective formulation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

I.D

Resident coordinator system

23. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to make the resident coordinator system more participatory in its functioning at the field level by, *inter alia*, making greater use of thematic groups and adopting a more consultative approach within the United Nations system;

24. *Notes* the improvements in the functioning of the resident coordinator system, and encourages further progress, in close consultation with national Governments;

25. *Encourages* further efforts, in particular through the United Nations Development Group, to further improve the resident coordinator system, and welcomes the efforts to continue to broaden the base of recruitment of resident coordinators by increasing the number of women resident coordinators and improving its selection criteria and procedures, including through the use of competency assessment and training and by ensuring that the resident coordinators take fully into account the mandates of all organizations of the resident coordinator system;

26. *Reaffirms* that resident coordinators, in full consultation with national Governments, should facilitate a coherent and coordinated United Nations follow-up to major international conferences at the field level;

27. *Requests* the United Nations system, including the funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the Secretariat, to provide support to the resident coordinator system;

I.E

United Nations Development Group

28. *Urges* the United Nations Development Group to work in a fully transparent and accountable manner towards a more coherent United Nations performance in the development field, while respecting the specific mandates and identity of its members;

II.A

Planning, programming and implementation

29. *Stresses* that the needs and priorities of recipient countries require flexibility and decentralization of operational activities to the country level, as well as the continued application of these measures to further enhance programme responsiveness and impact;

30. *Decides* that with the agreement of the host country, the United Nations development system should assist national Governments in creating an enabling environment in which the links between national Governments, the United Nations development system, civil society, national non-governmental organizations and the private sector that are involved in the development process are strengthened with a view to seeking new and innovative solutions to development problems in accordance with national policies and priorities;

31. *Calls for* the further simplification, harmonization and rationalization of procedures for operational activities of the United Nations development system at the field level, where possible, and developing common databases, in consultation with national Governments;

32. *Urges* the funds and programmes to put in place specific measures and timetables to advance the simplification and harmonization of procedures, and to report on these to their respective governing bodies;

33. *Also calls* for the United Nations development system to promote greater consistency in the presentation of budgets at the headquarters level, and, at the field level, the sharing of administrative systems and services;

34. *Emphasizes* the need to implement the outcome of the major United Nations conferences through the commitment and targets agreed at these conferences, and in this context stresses the importance to accelerate efforts for the coordinated follow-up of major conferences, welcomes Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/290, in which the Council decided on a step-by-step basis an intergovernmental process on relevant indicators to monitor the implementation of conference outcomes at all levels, and welcomes the decision to hold an informal Council meeting on this issue in 1999;

35. *Encourages* greater cooperation between the World Bank, regional development banks and all funds and programmes with a view to increased complementarity and better division of labour, as well as enhanced coherence in their sectoral activities, building on the existing arrangements and fully in accordance with the priorities of the recipient Government;

36. *Notes* the current initiatives in pursuing common premises and the need to take fully into account cost-benefit studies as called for by relevant resolutions, and encourages further implementation of such initiatives, where appropriate, while ensuring that there will be no additional burden imposed on host countries;

II.B

Capacity-building

37. *Reaffirms* that capacity-building and its sustainability should be explicitly articulated as a goal of technical assistance provided by the operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level, with the aim of strengthening national capacities in the fields of, *inter alia*, policy and programme formulation, development management, planning, implementation, coordination, monitoring and review;

II.C

Humanitarian assistance

38. *Expresses* concern at the growing number of natural disasters and environmental emergencies which often strikes countries that lack the resources to cope with them adequately;

39. *Recognizes* that the phases of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development are generally not consecutive but often overlap and occur simultaneously, and notes the urgent need to develop, through a strategic framework, when appropriate, a comprehensive approach to countries in crisis, and that the development of such a comprehensive approach must involve national authorities, as well as the United Nations system, donors and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and that national authorities must take a leading role in all aspects of the recovery plan, and also notes in this context the need for an early application of developmental tools in humanitarian emergencies, and takes note with appreciation of the recommendations included in the report of the Secretary-General in this regard;

40. *Stresses* that contributions to humanitarian assistance should not be provided at the expense of development assistance, and that sufficient resources for humanitarian assistance should be made available by the international community;

II.D

Regional dimension

41. *Stresses* the growing need for incorporating the regional and subregional dimension in United Nations operational activities for development, and encourages the resident coordinators, in close consultation with Governments, to secure greater involvement of the regional commissions, taking into account their agreed mandates and work programmes, in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as appropriate;

II.E

Cross-cutting themes

II.E.1

South-South cooperation/technical and economic cooperation among developing countries

42. *Requests* the United Nations system to take appropriate measures to improve the effective incorporation of technical cooperation among developing countries into their programmes and projects, and to intensify efforts towards mainstreaming the modality of

technical cooperation among developing countries, including through support to the activities of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, and encourages other relevant international institutions to undertake similar measures;

43. *Stresses* that South-South cooperation, including technical and economic cooperation among developing countries, offers viable opportunities for the development of developing countries, and in this context requests the executive boards of the funds and programmes to review, with a view to considering an increase, the allocation of resources for technical cooperation among developing countries activities;

44. *Notes* with satisfaction the broad-based support for technical cooperation among developing countries expressed by Member States at the twentieth anniversary commemoration of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action;

45. *Takes note with appreciation* of the recommendations on strengthening the integration of economic and technical cooperation among developing countries contained in the report of the Secretary-General;

II.E.2

Gender

46. *Requests* the Secretary-General and the United Nations development system to take all measures to ensure gender balance when making appointments, including at the senior level and in the field, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions;

47. *Stresses* the need for gender mainstreaming in operational activities of the United Nations system in all fields, in particular in support of poverty eradication;

II.E.3

National execution

48. *Further decides* that the United Nations system should use to the fullest extent possible and practicable available national expertise and indigenous technologies in the implementation of operational activities;

49. *Calls upon* all funds and programmes to consider ways to increase, within existing rules and regulations, the procurement of goods and services from developing countries, both as a mechanism to promote South-South cooperation and for enhancing national execution;

50. *Calls* for further work on the development of common guidelines at the field level for the recruitment, training and remuneration of national project personnel, including national consultants, in the formulation and implementation of development projects and programmes supported by the United Nations development system in order to enhance the coherence of the system;

51. *Requests* the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to continue to work on promoting, improving and expanding national execution, including through the simplification and strengthening of relevant procedures, so as to contribute to the advancement of national ownership and to enhance the absorptive capacity in developing countries, in particular in the least developed countries in Africa;

III

Monitoring and evaluation

52. *Recognizes* that the monitoring and evaluation process of operational activities, including joint evaluations, should be impartial and independent, under the overall leadership of the Government;

53. *Notes* the report on pilot evaluation conducted on the impact of operational activities and the need to continue these evaluations with the full and effective involvement of the recipient Government concerned in the process of such evaluation;

54. *Emphasizes* the importance of disseminating the experience of effective and efficient cooperation within the United Nations development system;

55. *Underlines* the importance of promoting, under the leadership of Governments, greater collaboration on issues relating to evaluation among recipient Governments, the United Nations development system, in particular the members of the United Nations Development Group, and relevant development partners at the country level;

56. *Recognizes*, in that context, the need to strengthen capacities of the recipient countries to perform both effective programme, project and financial monitoring and impact evaluations of operational activities funded by the United Nations;

57. *Further requests* that the United Nations system strengthen its efforts, in consultation with recipient countries, to ensure that the lessons learned from both monitoring and evaluation exercises are systematically applied into programming processes at the operational level and that evaluation criteria are built into all projects and programmes at their design stage;

IV

Follow-up

58. *Reaffirms* that the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system should take appropriate action for the full implementation of the present resolution, and requests the executive heads of those funds, programmes and specialized agencies to submit a yearly progress report to their governing bodies on measures taken and envisaged for the implementation of the present resolution, as well as appropriate recommendations;

59. *Invites* the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes to ensure that the heads of these funds and programmes include in their annual reports to the Economic and Social Council, prepared in accordance with Council resolution 1994/33 of 28 July 1994, a thorough analysis of problems encountered and lessons learned, with emphasis on issues arising from the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform programme, the triennial policy review and the follow-up to international conferences, so as to allow the Council to fulfil its coordinating role;

60. *Requests* the Secretary-General, after consultation with the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, to present a progress report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 on an appropriate management process, containing clear guidelines, targets, benchmarks and time-frames for the full implementation of the present resolution;

61. *Invites* the Economic and Social Council, during the operational activities segment of its substantive sessions of 1999 and 2000, to examine the operational activities of the United Nations system in order to evaluate the implementation of the present resolution with a view to ensuring its full implementation;

62. *Further invites* the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 1999, to consider, *inter alia*, the issues of poverty eradication and capacity-building, and at its substantive session of 2000, to consider, *inter alia*, harmonization and simplification, including programming, and resources, on the basis of progress reports by the Secretary-General, including appropriate recommendations;

63. *Decides*, as an integral part of the next triennial policy review of operational activities, in consultation with Member States, to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in the field of operational activities, and requests the Secretary-General to report, through the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2001, on the results of such an evaluation, including lessons learned and recommendations made, for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, and also requests the Secretary-General to report annually to the Economic and Social Council on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

64. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the present resolution in the context of the triennial policy review, and to make appropriate recommendations.